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INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 2244
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0995
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 1154
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2943
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAY 0561
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 1278
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4990
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1983
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0264
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 000537

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR, LA PAZ FOR A/DCM C LAMBERT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2019

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [HA](#) [DR](#)

SUBJECT: DOUBLE HOMICIDE RILES DOMINICAN-HAITIAN RELATIONS

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 463

Classified By: Roland W. Bullen, Charge d'Affaires, Reasons 1.4(b), (d)

¶11. (SBU) Summary: On May 1, following an apparent argument over payment on a loan, a Haitian national killed a Dominican national in Santo Domingo. The following day, in retaliation for this murder, the victim's brother sought out and murdered the original aggressor's brother. The second murder devolved into a public scene with observers apparently spitting on the body and taking photos of the carnage with camera phones. The matter has escalated bi-national tensions, which the two Foreign Ministries hope to ease in a meeting Friday afternoon. Recent events show that the GODR is taking actions to bring the perpetrators to justice. End Summary.

BACKGROUND

¶12. (SBU) On May 1, an apparent argument over payment on a loan escalated into a murder when an alleged Haitian national, to whom the loan was due, attacked a Dominican national with a machete and severed his spinal column. This murder lead to retaliatory action the following day by the victim's family. According to news reports, the first victim's brother attacked and killed the brother of the Haitian who had committed the first murder. The second victim's decapitated body was then displayed in a public street, where those in the area took videos and photos with camera phones and reportedly spit on the body.

GOVERNMENTAL RESPONSE

¶13. (SBU) Due to a local holiday, GODR offices were closed the Monday following the murders, May 4, and the GODR claimed that it had not received any note of protest from the GOH as of the morning of May 5. Regardless, the GODR released its own strong condemnation of the act on May 5. In that condemnation statement by the Foreign Minister, "the Dominican government, as on previous occasions, strongly condemns these heinous acts and any others that may occur, not only against a Dominican citizen, but also against any human being regardless of his or her nationality. Also, in this occasion those responsible for the acts will be brought before the courts to respond for their acts."

¶4. (SBU) Also on May 5, the Chief of the National Police spoke out against vigilante justice and called for the public to instead turn suspects over to the police for prosecution. On May 7, a local news reports stated that the Haitian ambassador to the Dominican Republic had been recalled for consultations, but the article may be erroneous since later press reports have him attending a meeting in Santo Domingo today.

RECENT EVENTS

¶5. (SBU) On May 7, the Dominican police investigation bore fruit when one of the Dominicans sought for the murder of the Haitian national turned himself in to the police. In a subsequent press conference, the individual, identified as the cousin of the deceased Dominican, denied that he was involved in the murder, claiming instead that a mob had committed the crime. The police stated that they were still seeking the brother of the murdered Dominican, and asked that he also turn himself in.

¶6. (SBU) Thursday also brought news of protests in the Herrera neighborhood where the murders took place. The residents there held protests against the large presence of Haitians in the neighborhood. About this same time, the Police Chief reported that he has increased the police presence in Herrera.

¶7. (SBU) The Senate also condemned the tone of the GOH's "disproportionate" statement that questioned the values of the Dominican society. He also noted that the statement was imprudent and lacked tact as the Senate is currently considering the nationality issue in their constitutional reform. Most Dominican commentary on the incident has sought to portray the incident as isolated and not representative of a pattern of human rights violations against Haitians.

¶8. (SBU) Friday afternoon, the Foreign Minister, Dominican Ambassador to Haiti and Haitian Ambassador to the Dominican Republic are scheduled to meet and hold a joint press conference regarding the double murders and subsequent related events.

COMMENT

¶9. (C) Unfortunately, vigilante justice is all too common here. Although the police have made some advances in their investigations and respect for human rights, the public still views them as unable or unwilling to stop the growing tide of crime in the country. This most recent double murder is another example of this vigilantism, but the aftermath has been strongly nationalistic. Post is unable to confirm the more lurid allegations, e.g. that police were present and took no action during the murder, and that there have been 12-20 murders of Haitians here since January.

¶10. (C) Contrary to Dominican statements, there is indeed a pattern of human rights violations against Haitians here, as documented in Post's annual human rights report (though murders are rare). However, it strikes us as odd that the Haitian Government would choose the current incident to take a stand, given that the events began with a brutal murder of a Dominican by a Haitian; that the GODR condemned the crimes on the first business day following the incident; and that the police investigations appear to be succeeding. In any event, Dominicans have a good deal to answer for, even if not for this latest incident (that remains to be seen). It all comes at the worst possible time -- just as the two countries were on the verge of reactivating their Mixed Bilateral Commission.